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Reprinted from
AMERICAN MEDICINE
Vol. XI, No. 6, page 215,
February 10, 1906.



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7 Mar '06



THE EDIBILITY OF ANIMAL SPLEENS.

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In the course of my investigations on animal spleens, the question naturally came to mind why these organs are never eaten. I knew as a fact that they are greedily devoured by butchers' dogs, and found myself asking whether the natural carnivorous instinct might not be a surer guide in the matter than human prejudice. So I tried a piece raw, and found it had much the taste of a scrap of raw beef. I then roasted a piece on a fork over hot coals, and ate it with a grain of salt. I found it capital. I then broiled a whole spleen on a gridiron like a steak and made a meal of it. It has about the consistency of liver when cooked, but is decidedly more agreeable in flavor. I found hog spleens richer and more palatable than beef spleens. I then tried them in the form of a stew or soup, or hashed up after broiling and served on toast. I found this the best dish of all when properly seasoned, and worked it on my friends under the name of a "*Salmis Hæmatique*." We found it a most hearty food, and always followed by a peculiarly bracing effect on the nerves, which I attribute to its richness in iron and phosphorus. Chemie analysis demonstrates that it contains $\frac{3}{4}$ gr. iron and $1\frac{1}{2}$ gr. phosphorus per ounce. These experiments fully satisfied me that the spleens of hogs and cattle were a rich and wholesome food, possessed of valuable hematinic properties, and ought to be generally eaten.

Why, then, had they never been used as food? The reason was furnished by my experiments.

Spleens, as they come from the animal, have a soft and pulpy consistency. They may be squeezed by hand into a bloody mush, as one might squeeze a handful of currants. This leaves the hand stained and bloody. I tried one on a dog, which was ravenously eaten, though it fouled and reddened his mouth in a way that was disagreeably suggestive. The application of heat, however, by the coagulation of their free albumin, gives them a consistency to be cut, chewed, and eaten like ordinary meat. By this means their natural repulsiveness is entirely done away with.

I find they must be eaten perfectly fresh. Their softness and the great number of blood-corpuscles in the pulp renders them peculiarly prone to decomposition. They must be eaten within six or eight hours after slaughtering at the furthest. I find it impossible to keep them over night even on ice. They are always found stale and sour in the morning and only fit for garbage. When cooked, however, they keep better.

Their softness and the necessity of eating them quite fresh shows why they cannot be handled and sold by the butchers like ordinary meat. They are in their natural state unmarketable. They can only be obtained at the slaughter-houses, which involves trouble and expense. To obviate this difficulty I have experimented largely with different methods of curing them while fresh and thus rendering them capable of permanent preservation. This subject I shall return to at a later date.

The number of spleens available for food purposes is almost without limit. A rough estimate based on the United States Census Reports reveals the fact that there are upward of 50,000,000 pounds of edible spleens thrown away yearly in the United States. This includes the spleens of cattle, hogs, and sheep. An ox spleen weighs upward of 2 pounds, a hog's spleen about 1 pound, a sheep's spleen 4 ounces, on the average. It is easy to see what an enormous amount of good food is thus wasted

every year. The commercial value of these spleens reckoned at 10 cents per pound would be about \$5,000,000 per annum.

To be safely eaten they must, of course, be perfectly healthy. It is well known that the spleen is subject to various diseases. For instance, all infectious diseases are liable to affect the spleen. This is seen in tuberculosis, charbon, hog cholera, Texas fever, and other diseases of the same group. The animal parasite of Texas fever has a special tendency to affect the spleen and leave it permanently diseased, as in human ague, so that it would be wise to exclude the spleens of Southern cattle altogether. The government inspections already throw out all diseased carcasses, beside which, a personal inspection of every spleen handled by a competent expert would be strictly necessary. Tuberculosis, now growing painfully prevalent in all our domestic animals, is the one disease to be especially guarded against. Fortunately, the detection of a tuberculous spleen is easy.

This is a subject of vast import, medically as well as economically. The chemic composition of the animal spleen, coupled with its physiologic function as a blood maker, plainly indicates its value as a food for persons affected with impoverished blood. The inefficacy of mere medicinal agents in chronic diseases has always been recognized. "Diseases which are caused by depletion," says Hippocrates quaintly, "must be cured by repletion." Tonics and stimulants are well so far as they go, but to build up the system properly an ample supply of wholesome and nourishing food is a *sine qua non*. The spleen contains every element necessary to make healthy blood, albumin, iron, phosphorus, and mineral salts, all in natural organic combination and in the most digestible form. To my mind, the whole problem of iron and phosphorus medication is destined to find its solution in the general adoption of animal spleens as a blood-making food.

"I find myself," said Emerson, "harping on a few

strings." Perhaps I am harping too much on the dietetic value of animal spleens ; yet something tells me I ought not to stop till I have succeeded in convincing people of their usefulness.

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